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RHFMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/CJCS WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
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RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC//J-5// PRIORITY
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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC//OSD/ISA/EAP// PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 000644

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TAGS: MARR MCAP PREL PGOV TSPA KS CH

SUBJECT: ROK REACTION TO DOD REPORT ON CHINA MILITARY POWER

REF: STATE 020659

Classified By: POL M/C Joseph Y. Yun, reasons 1.4 (b,d).

¶1. (C) As requested in reftel, Emboffs engaged our ROKG contacts to gauge reaction to the March 3rd Defense Department release of the 2008 China Military Power Report. Ministry of National Defense (MND) U.S. Policy Division Chief Colonel Song Seung-jong told us that he did not review the report in detail but viewed the document as containing no major new developments or assessments over the report released last year. He noted that while Chinese military expenditures appeared to be growing at a rapid rate, above and beyond the rate of other countries in the region, this had yet to cause great concerns because the exact figures do not appear to be well known. Still, Song strongly concurred with the report's findings that Chinese military transparency is a major concern for the ROK military. When asked if the ROKG had any experience with cyber intrusions, Song said that this was a key concern for the military in particular. He told us he was personally aware of intrusions on ROK military unclassified systems which appeared to have originated from

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China. Song emphasized that while the intrusions did not appear to have successfully breached MND firewalls, or extracted any key information, it was an area of continued concern for ROK military security specialists.

¶2. (C) Kim Sung-Eun from Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade's Security and Counter-Terrorism Cooperation Division also noted the rise in China's asymmetric warfare capabilities, but offered a slightly different view from our MND contact. Ms. Kim argued that while she understood why the United States was sensitive to China's growing military strength, she said it may be premature to assess China's precise intentions. Kim suggested that China's new capabilities, particularly in the area of ballistic missile development, warranted close scrutiny. She speculated that because China had not formally signed on to the Missile Technology Control Regime checks and does not participate in any international strategic missile reduction agreements, PRC leaders have no motivation to curb further development of their missile arsenal. Kim also suggested that China's continued missile development was likely in response to

perceived threats posed by Russia and the United States. She stressed that continuous engagement with China was really the only way to assess the PRC's true intentions, and that doing so would be the best way to derive an appropriate strategy in response to Chinese actions, thereby helping to ensure that there would be no miscalculations or missteps that might trigger instability in the region.

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